

REMARKS

The Office Action in the above-identified application has been carefully considered and this amendment has been presented to place this application in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, reexamination and reconsideration of this application are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3–20 are in the present application. It is submitted that these claims, are patentably distinct over the prior art cited by the Examiner, and that these claims are in full compliance with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112. Changes to the claims, as presented herein, are not made for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. sections 101, 102, 103 or 112. Rather, these changes are made simply for clarification and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicants are entitled. Claim 2 is canceled.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication by the Examiner that claim 9-20 are allowed and that claims 2, 3, and 5-7 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In response, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 to include the limitations of allowable claim 2, from which claims 3-8 depend. Accordingly, Applicants believe all remaining claims are now in condition for allowance.

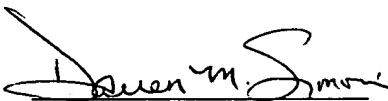
Claims 1, 4, and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kikuchi et al. (U.S. Patent 6,574,422). However, in view of the amendment to claim 1 discussed above, this rejection is now moot.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the application as now presented is in condition for allowance. Early and favorable reconsideration of the application are respectfully requested.

No fees are deemed to be required for the filing of this amendment, but if such are, the Examiner is hereby authorized to charge any insufficient fees or credit any overpayment associated with the above-identified application to Deposit Account No. 50-0320.

If any issues remain, or if the Examiner has any further suggestions, he/she is invited to call the undersigned at the telephone number provided below. The Examiner's consideration of this matter is gratefully acknowledged.

Respectfully submitted,
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